

VZCZCXRO2357
OO RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHJL #0247 1311141
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 111141Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY BANJUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7514
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS BANJUL 000247

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DAKAR PLS PASS ODC, DAO, AND RAO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [GA](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: MINOR PUBLIC DISTURBANCE NEAR CAPITAL

INCIDENT SPARKED BY YOUTH'S DEATH

1. (SBU) Corroborating media reports, our sources report that on the evening of May 9, police in the Banjul suburb of Serrekunda raided a hangout known to be frequented by youths engaged in smoking cannabis and mugging passers-by. The raid resulted in the detention of 12 youths and the death of one. There are conflicting accounts as to the cause of the death; according to a press release by the police, the death occurred when the victim, fleeing the police raid, impaled himself on metal fencing. Some contacts, however, give credence to rumors that the victim was stabbed by a police officer.

RESIDENTS CONFRONT POLICE

2. (SBU) Whatever the cause of death, area residents, mainly youths, immediately reacted by burning tires and gathering outside the neighborhood police station where the detainees were being held. Authorities responded by deploying a paramilitary unit, which promptly dispersed the protestors and restored order. By the morning of May 10, calm prevailed in the area, although authorities blocked, for several hours, the main thoroughfare in the immediate vicinity of the incident, police presence there was heavier than usual, and some shops closed for the day. As of May 11, the area affected remains calm and a business-as-usual atmosphere prevails. .

ASSESSMENT AND STATUS OF AMCITS

3. (SBU) Piecing together reports we received, the actual confrontation between youths and authorities lasted only about several hours during the night of May 9 and was confined to a small neighborhood area. In many societies, so minor an incident would pass largely unnoticed, but in The Gambia, with its generally tranquil environment, any public protest, no matter how minor, becomes major news. On learning of the incident, Embassy monitored developments closely, with RSO and her staff visiting the area and consulting with senior police officials. No Embassy personnel were affected by the incident, and we picked up no reports of any impact on the private Amcit community. Nonetheless, post proposes to issue a warden message (language being cleared with Department) to remind the Amcit community that the incident, minor as it was, serves as a reminder of the need to maintain security awareness.
STAFFORD